

A THEME

KEEPING BEES FOR PROFIT AND PLEASURE

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER

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Most people, I believe, when they think of bees think of stings and honey. Nearly everyone likes honey yet a very few people will go anywhere near the bees. When one gets used to them, one finds bees most interesting little insects, and in most cases very gentle provided that you treat them gently too.

PLEASURES IN BEEKEEPING. The layman can hardly see any pleasure in keeping bees and getting stung every other day. I don't believe that there are many beekeepers who find much pleasure in getting stung either; however most beekeepers rarely get stung.

In spite of this hazard to me it is a real pleasure to work with the bees. They are really quite friendly. Although they may buzz around your head with a rather curious hum, they seldom have any intentions of stinging. If you will be calm and don't move rapidly, you can push them about in the hive like so many flies. Sometimes when you accidentally pinch a bee she will sting, but usually not even then.

It is fun to take out a frame and watch the bees at work keeping house. The queen walks around looking into every cell and carefully lays an egg in each empty one. The workers are all busy. They move about and poke their heads into one cell after another. Some are bringing food to the brood, some storing nectar, and others tamping pollen into the cells.

The real pleasure in beekeeping is taking off the honey along in the middle of the summer. You then see the fruits

of your labors of the preceeding winter and spring: Super after super, each filled with twenty-eight sections of comb honey with snow white cappings; That golden yellow stream as the honey flows from the extractor; Bottle after bottle, can after can is filled with the precious liquid. This is the true pleasure of beekeeping.

PROFIT IN BEEKEEPING. Professional beekeepers keep a great many large colonies. It is an established fact that a single large colony will produce much more honey than many small ones; consequently the colonies in commercial apiaries often reach mamouth proportions. Some of these colonies produce seven or eight hundred pounds of honey per season. A good average for commercial apiaries is about one hundred pounds per colony, while the average back yard colony produces only twenty-five to thirty pounds. Many tons of honey are used each year by the bakeries, and there is a surprisingly large demand for honey for table use, especially in the western states. Most back yard beekeepers that sell their honey have a much larger demand than they can hope to supply.

Beeswax also brings a very nice price. Aside from its use in the industry as foundation, beeswax is usde chiefly for candles for the Catholic Church.

Honey and beeswax are the only profits received directly from the bees. However the bee's value in pollenization of orchards and truck crops can never be overemphasized. Every

fruit farm and most truck farms either keep bees or rent them for this purpose alone.

The literature of beeculture is filled with countless stories of great success at beekeeping. However not every one is successful all the time. In poor honey years only a few colonies will produce any surplus at all, and the great majority of beekeepers will suffer a loss. In general most beekeepers can make a profit of from ten to fifty dollars per colony per season, and one man can easily handle one hundred colonies or more. The majority of the bees in this country will probably be found in back yard apiaries, kept mostly for pleasure and incidentally for profit.

Frank G Carpenter

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REFERENCES. My own experience with bees and my readings in the literature for the past few years, principally from, GLEANINGS IN BEECULTURE, published by the A. I. Root Co., Medina, Ohio.